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A CONVERSATION THAT MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED BETWEEN DR. WILLIAM CAREY AND THE REV. ADONIRAM JUDSON, SERAMPORE, INDIA, SEPTEMBER, 1812

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In this "Imaginary Conversation" many phrases attributed to Dr. Carey or to Mr. Judson have been borrowed from their journals and letters. The denominational controversy to which allusion is made is now happily a thing of the past, but the differences between Congregationalists and Baptists must have been much in Mr. Judson's mind a hundred years ago, and were a source, no doubt, of keen distress. It will be remembered, however, that on his visit to America in 1845 he received a most cordial welcome from the churches with which he had been formerly in communion.

CAREY: This little building to which our walk has brought us, Brother Judson, was once a heathen temple. Forsaken, long ago, by the votaries of its ugly little black idol, it has since been set apart to Christian uses. Here Church of England chaplains and brethren of the London Missionary Society have frequently met with my Serampore associates and myself to recommend brethren to the work of the Lord in various portions of this great field. No such union of heart between different denominations exists in England.

JUDSON: No, nor in America.

CAREY: Let us rest awhile in this cool shade. Under this roof the sainted Henry Martyn lodged for a time. In the cool of the day he used to kneel on this open platform, overlooking the river, and pour out his soul in agonizing prayer for India's idolatrous millions. Here, six years ago, the brethren with fervent supplication committed him to the Di-

vine mercies on the eve of his departure for Dinajpur. We call it since "Henry Martyn's pagoda." You will not wonder that it is to us all a hallowed spot.

JUDSON: I thank you with all my heart for bringing me here. God grant that many other shrines, now given over to the abominations of the heathen, may speedily thus be purified and redeemed! But tell me, Dr. Carey, are there signs discernible today that India is well-nigh ready to turn from idols to the living God?

CAREY: First, my brother, let me beg you no longer in addressing me to use the title you have just employed. I appreciate deeply the honor my brethren in America have done me in conferring this degree. It would not be courteous to refuse it, but I would not be continually reminded of their partial estimate of my services to the Redeemer's kingdom. I am plain William Carey, saved by grace, no worthier or more

honorable now in Serampore than when I cobbled shoes in Moulton.

But now as to your question. It is certain that many more people care for the gospel in India today than twenty years ago. The Lord is doing great things in Calcutta, to my personal knowledge. Open profanity and Sabbath-breaking are much abated. In the highest circles, religion is a common theme of conversation. Many family altars have been set up. More than thirty ministers of the gospel are witnessing for Christ in India today.

JUDSON: But you are speaking, are you not, of the increased attention given to religion by Europeans?

CAREY: Doubtless. But that increased attention is very cheering. It strengthens the heart of every missionary. There is even reason to think that the inveterate hostility to our enterprise of the honorable East India Company is abating. All these things work mightily, if imperceptibly, upon the heathen heart.

JUDSON: Imperceptibly, my dear sir? But surely there have been heathens, not a few, brought to Christ?

CAREY: Ah, yes. I say it humbly and gratefully, God has signally rewarded our efforts. We should praise him with overflowing hearts for the salvation of a single soul. But the membership of our churches numbers more than three hundred. And although not all of them, as sad inconsistencies and lapses testify, are really rooted and grounded in the faith, we have much assurance of the prevalence of a genuine love for the Redeemer. They have thrown off the hateful bondage of caste, they trample upon their idols, they keep the Sabbath day, they appear to love

the Word. Yes, these New Testament churches of baptized believers are a precious witness that God honors our work.

JUDSON: And yet—

CAREY: Pardon my interruption, my son. I surmise your disappointment. And I sympathize with it. You are saying to yourself that at the end of a score of years the harvest of these ripening fields should have been far more abundant.

JUDSON: Indeed. I confess, since your kindness encourages me to speak frankly, that your account falls somewhat below the expectations with which I left America.

CAREY: That I can well believe. We at Serampore are not unaware that the brethren at home are impatient for large numerical returns, for great gatherings of redeemed souls. We are even informed that on the part of some of our staunchest supporters there is serious dissatisfaction with the employment of so much of our time in the study, the printing office, the school.

JUDSON: You will not, surely, be offended, my brother, if I admit that I have myself sometimes wondered that while myriads of unsaved souls around you are going into eternity every hour you can be contented with this uneventful routine of translation and of school-teaching. Was it for this that you were commissioned? Forgive me if my words are presumptuous. I have been prone from my youth—I confess it with shame—to an undue confidence in my own opinions.

CAREY: No need to ask forgiveness. Your question is one which I must always gladly entertain. But let us

waive it for a time while you tell me of your own call to this service.

JUDSON: What can I say, my brother, other than previous relations have conveyed to you? Nevertheless, it is a joy to recur to that memorable experience. My thoughts had long been engaged with my duty to foreign missions without reaching a settled conviction. But one day while in meditation and prayer upon this matter in the course of a solitary walk in the woods at Andover, the command of Christ, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," came so forcibly to my mind that since that hour I have had no other purpose in life than to obey it. There were great difficulties in my way. But my resolve has never for a moment been shaken. Brother Carey, I have been called to the work of an evangelist. I must preach the gospel of Christ where he has never yet been named, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

CAREY: Your testimony stirs me deeply, my son. And with my whole heart I praise God for the strong assurance you are permitted to entertain that you are a chosen vessel unto the Gentiles.

JUDSON: But was it not so with you?

CAREY: I have always been of a sober, self-distrustful temper, not given to spiritual transports and ecstasies. Doubtless these high privileges are reserved for the saints, for men like Brainerd and Martyn. Nevertheless, a conviction was wrought upon me. How? I cannot tell. It must have come slowly and quietly. But I have sometimes told myself that I should not be here today if I had not read Captain Cook's *Voyages*, and by it had my

thoughts turned compassionately to the multitude of dusky island savages who had never heard of the Son of God who came from heaven to save lost sinners. It must have been in those days that I became a missionary. Surely unto me also is this grace given that I may preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

JUDSON: Ah, how my heart leaps in response to those words! To proclaim the good news of salvation—in the name of Christ to plead, face to face, with dying men—is it not for this that the missionary is sent forth? Can any duty be more urgent upon him than this?

CAREY: I have but one rule of duty, my son. The immediate duty is always the urgent duty. With us, at Serampore, it is plain that the immediate duty is to give to India the word of God in its vernaculars. Will not the printed page effectually preach Christ and his salvation? And what lasting result shall the most fervent evangelist win, unfurnished with the Bible? Not that we do not ourselves preach persistently and faithfully and, as we are able, qualify and send forth native agents. But a great task is appointed us which we dare not decline. The labor is very great. It demands unflagging industry and an unwearied spirit. It may be that we must yet consecrate to it the toil of many years.

JUDSON: But must we then conclude that the glorious and signal triumphs of the gospel which the church so ardently expects are not for our generation? Will it not be our privilege to behold the idols cast to the bats, and the peoples that sit in darkness turning to the true God?

CAREY: These are mysteries for which I have no key. I only know that

the missionary has need of a faith in the gracious and immovable purposes of God that can outwear the longest and the darkest night. He learns, with whatever expectations he may have left his native shores, that the gospel wins its way among the heathens very slowly. Listen! Even now you may hear from the temple just across the river the horrid din of the abominable worship of devils. Truly, my son, you have come to dwell where Satan's throne is.

JUDSON: But I remember the opinion expressed by Sir William Jones, years ago, that the attachment of both Hindus and Mohammedans to their ancestral systems is lessening every day. And surely he was a learned man, and well acquainted with India.

CAREY: Yes, Sir William Jones was not without opportunities for forming a sound judgment on these matters. And I have myself sometimes thought that there is less prejudice and bigotry among these idolaters than once. But these are opinions. The facts must be faced. We do not yet see the strongholds of the Adversary cast down, and penitent multitudes turning unto the living God.

JUDSON: The more wonderful with every word you speak, dear brother in Christ, appears to me the serene, patient, unflagging routine of toil through which you have already accomplished tasks at which the Christian world marvels and gives thanks to God.

CAREY: Ah, that is little to my credit. My single talent is a very humble one. And yet I strive to magnify it. I can plod. But I have talked far too much of myself. It was in my mind, Brother Judson, when we came out together for this quiet hour, to express to

you more fully than I have yet been able to do our deep joy that in loyal obedience to the word of God, you have followed your Lord in the appointed way of baptism and thus have entered into our denominational fellowship.

JUDSON: Little indeed did I dream, when leaving home, that I should arrive at Serampore a convinced Baptist, or that my desire to defend the Paedo-baptist position against your assault should have brought me over to your point of view.

CAREY: To be sure, you need not have feared our assaults. In any case, we should have made none. Indeed we care less perhaps than we should for the matters in controversy between Baptists and Paedobaptists, so far more important are the concerns which occupy our attention here. It has even been in my heart to wish, though you must not whisper this to your new Baptist correspondents, that all denominational distinctions on the foreign field might be swept away. But these are millennial fancies, and my own household of faith has ever been very dear to me.

JUDSON: Indeed, indeed, the sympathy of my brethren at Serampore is very precious to me. It has been a severe trial to my wife and me to separate ourselves from our friends at home. That, by the step just taken, we have forfeited completely the support promised us is certain when I remember that the missionaries of the Board were definitely instructed to baptize credible believers and their households. Far heavier, however, is the loss of friendships. My wife has been writing recently to a cherished friend in America who will no longer love her, she fears, when she learns that Ann has become a Baptist.

CAREY: But surely you need not apprehend such direful consequences from a mere change of conviction upon denominational questions—questions regarding which good men have always differed.

JUDSON: I do not know how it may be in England but in North America the gulf that divides Congregationalists from Baptists is very wide. Sectarian controversies are bitter. I cannot deceive myself. The news of my immersion will be received in the Congregational churches with keen chagrin.

CAREY: But certainly the Baptists will rally to your support. You may depend upon the active sympathy of my friends and correspondents, Dr. Baldwin of Boston and Dr. Staughton of Philadelphia. There must be many others like-minded with them.

JUDSON: It may be so. Nevertheless, this is a trial hour. Whether the Baptist churches of America will compassionate my situation, I know not. I am personally unknown to them. They may not unreasonably demur to the request that they accept as their missionary agent one trained in the tenets of Congregationalism.

CAREY: Be of good cheer, my brother! Though you walk in darkness today, you are following divine guidance. Expect great things of God! He will not disappoint you. We shall learn by and by, I am assured, in reply to your sur-

prising communication, that the working of the Holy Spirit is manifest in the churches of our faith in America. I foresee that through the trial of your faith the cause of our Redeemer will be greatly strengthened. It is a little thing in itself that you, once a Congregationalist, have become a Baptist. How insignificant a matter is mere denominational aggrandizement to men placed as we are, who wait with prayer to see the church of Christ enlarge the place of her tent and stretch forth the curtains of her habitations.

JUDSON: Your words shame my fears. I will wait on the Lord and take courage. "The Star in the East" again shines brightly before me, and my confidence is renewed that it may yet lead me to Burmah, for whose salvation my heart has greatly longed.

CAREY: It is a land of thick darkness, my son. But of late it has seemed to us not altogether inaccessible to the gospel. The king is not unfriendly. And yet we do not forget that the missionary in Burmah is outside of British protection and at the mercy of an absolute and arbitrary heathen monarch.

JUDSON: Nevertheless, I must ask the brethren at evening worship to make, once more, united supplication for Burmah. I would fain see the way to Burmah opening before me, even though bonds and imprisonment await me there!